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Hannah Joy Sajban

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Resistance, Growth, and Self-Critique in the Jewish Newspaper Press, 1881-1889

by

Hannah Joy Sajban

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, I directly engage with the Jewish newspaper press in London from 1881-1889 to explore the ways it resists anti-Semitic discourse often found in the mainstream British press while simultaneously growing itself, despite seemingly constant internal and external conflicts. My main objective for this project was to juxtapose our present-day landscape, where fake news often feels inescapable, with London's 19<sup>th</sup>-century East End through the use of creative formatting, firsthand research, and palimpsest. Along with contemporary concerns, I also aimed to move the spotlight onto the wide web of editors, writers, and readers that created the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish newspaper press, a network I knew little about before this project. In engaging directly with articles and correspondences from the *Jewish World* and its counterpart the *Jewish Standard* I was captivated by a narrative of resistance, growth, and even self-critique that I had never heard before. These newspapers struggled against anti-Semitic discourse found in other medias and even in imaginative literature while also navigating the changing currents of the press in the form of the New Journalism and facing their own constraints in areas like gender. Their story may help us engage with issues like fake news, anti-Semitism, sexism, and anti-immigration rhetoric while also finding hope in their resistance.

## Resistance, Growth, and Self-Critique in the Jewish Newspaper Press, 1881-1889

Hannah Sajban

I'm tired of the news. I'm tired of the way it makes things spectacular that aren't, and deals so simplistically with what's truly appalling. ... I'm tired of the selfishness. I'm tired of how we're doing nothing to stop it. I'm tired of how we're encouraging it. I'm tired of the violence there is, and I'm tired of the violence that's on its way, that's coming, that hasn't happened yet. – Ali Smith, *Autumn*, 56-57.

June 9, 2018. I'm walking through the streets of Whitechapel, lost in sensations and space. Loud honks of taxis blend with the sounds of birds and pieces of conversations that don't belong to me: *I'm not sure I believe in a God, but more of an unending love without a name.* <sup>1</sup> *זה לא דגיוני*. Words in languages I don't understand, but should, stand as a soft contrast to my American accent that feels harsh here. Amidst the loud, the cityscape itself seems to be in a tug-of-war between history and modernity. An antique building, once a synagogue, now boasts a shining Starbucks sign. A rusty blue plaque boasting the name Amy Levy is stamped above a tourist shop. I open the door to a bookstore: quiet. On the wall of employee favorites, some familiar names stare back at me: Austen, Dickens, Smith, Brontë. I'm wondering what's happened to Zangwill, Aguilar, Blumenfeld, Levy. Walking outside, I'm struck by the smell: perfumeries and garbage intermingling. The odor turns to a sour taste with newspaper titles glaring at me: "Nazis and Anti-Semites Slip through GOP Primaries."<sup>2</sup> The bitter taste lingers as the Jack the Ripper Tour begins. A dim whirl of a projector behind the tour guide's voice. *And here we have the body of his first victim, Mary Ann Nichols. We're standing right where her body would be.* I attempt to focus on the sound of the projector, on the cars rushing past, eyes averted from the grotesque hologram. My ears are instead filled with the children present on the tour, running to get a closer look, yelling, laughing. The tour guide cracks a joke. More laughter. Mary Ann Nichols' bloodied body fades in and out as the children run in front of the projector. I wonder what she

would have had to say. I wonder whether she liked dancing, or writing, or the news. I wonder if she has ever been talked about as more than another dead girl. The present moment plasters eerily over the past: women's constant battle to be viewed as subject, not object. A reminder that news and fake news have always vied for attention, have always plagued the East End and its inhabitants. Time is a palimpsest wrought with irony, revealing what Jones and Mitchell call "the presence of a ghostly, partially legible past bleeding through contemporary" life.<sup>3</sup> *Fake news* has become what we shout at people with differing views to justify where we stand, but its dire effects on communities – slander, discrimination, even death – threatens our freedom.

As the tour ends with clapping and joviality, I'm brought back to now as a street cleaner grows by me. I look down at my screen and see more news alerts. One from the *Independent* asserts, "More than 4m Antisemitic Tweets Sent in One Year, Report Finds."<sup>4</sup> I keep clicking the links, scrolling past more headlines: "Anti-Semitic Incidents Rise 60 Per Cent in a Year in US" and "Hitler did nothing wrong."<sup>5</sup> I remember an article I saw yesterday at the British Library: "The Invasion of England," an anti-Semitic piece published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1888.<sup>6</sup> Suddenly, I'm Alice falling down a rabbit hole.

What follows is an exploration of the history of fake news in the late 1880s, a time when anti-Semitism was rife and Jewish immigrants were targeted as easy scapegoats for prosecuting urban crime, especially in the aftermath of the Jack the Ripper case. Yet then, as now, there were voices of resistance that used new media to fight back against oppression and misrepresentations of the Jewish community. In a media environment infused with the sensationalist New Journalism, it was often difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, yet this is just what the Jewish press aimed to accomplish through cleverly constructed counter-reporting, literary criticism, and reader engagement. Contemporary scholars like Judith Walkowitz and L. Perry Curtis have

written extensively on anti-Semitism in the press at the fin de siècle, including accusations in the mainstream press that Jews were responsible for blood libel killings and the Ripper murders. I first aim to add to this scholarship by showing how one newspaper – the *Jewish World* (1873-1934) – fought back.<sup>7</sup> My second goal is to demonstrate how sensational reporting associated with the New Journalism was connected to the dissemination of fake news about Jewish immigration; how writers, editors, and readers responded to this discriminatory coverage, especially in the wake of the Jack the Ripper murders; how this fake news bled into fiction; how Jewish readers turned to journalism as a tool for resistance; and how this will to resist emerged simultaneously as an exploration of the Jewish community's own internal divisions, as demonstrated in the issues of gender presented by women in the *Jewish World* and the *Jewish Standard* (1888-1891). By looking back to the late nineteenth century, I hope to provide a backstory that helps us understand the modern-day issue of fake news, anti-Semitism, sexism, and anti-immigration rhetoric alongside corresponding resistance movements.

### **The Jewish East End: Anti-Semitic Journalism and the Jewish Press**

By 1850, roughly 50,000 Jewish immigrants had settled in London. Later in the century, from 1880 to 1914, an additional 150,000 Jews settled in the East End, fleeing violence in Russia and Ukraine. These immigrants were often poor and uneducated in the English language due to the urgency with which they were forced to leave their native countries. East End settlers built their own synagogues, worked in poor conditions for little pay, and, above all, attempted to maintain their faith and culture while interacting with the surrounding community.<sup>8</sup> Despite their peaceful co-existence with other East End immigrants, Jewish people fell subject to rampant anti-immigration campaigns during 1880s which accused them of depressing the economy, compromising public health, and fomenting violence.<sup>9</sup> In an 1895 article entitled “Whitechapel,”

an unnamed author at first seems to offer a sympathetic perspective: “In this single parish are located some sixteen thousand Jews, many of them, alas, living in an almost inhuman condition. Twenty thousand more are easily included within a half-mile radius.”<sup>10</sup> Despite their cramped, often poverty-ridden living conditions, the author notes, the Jewish community “may even be said to be a moral population. Drunkenness is almost unknown; temperance societies are unheard of, [and] ... licentiousness among women is equally rare. Family ties are sacred.”<sup>11</sup> Yet, as the author takes readers on a walk through the bustling streets of Whitechapel on a Sunday morning, she/he also notes that the growth of synagogues is a “problem” of the “rapidly-increasing population” and “the English visitor almost feels himself one of a subject race in the presence of dominant and overwhelming invaders.”<sup>12</sup> This example of New Journalism is fake news because it presents a nationalist, individual prejudice as truth.

In 1882, an article titled “Have the Outrages been Exaggerated” in the *Jewish World* identified sensational, prejudiced reporting as a pressing problem for the Jewish community:

In a country where the Press – that portion, of it, that is to say, which is permitted to speak – is paid; where a recognised department of diplomacy is lying, elevated to the dignity of a fine art; and where brutality is so necessary and integral a part of administration that a general who undertakes to examine a civil prisoner calls for “nakhayka” – knout – to freshen up the culprit’s memory; in such a country, we say, it is not surprising that outrages, when committed upon so cordially hated a class as the Jews, should provoke but a sneer of questioning incredulity and be received with assertions of exaggeration and unreliability.<sup>13</sup>

This article draws attention to misrepresentations of the Jewish community in the mainstream London press, particularly its dissemination of lies about Jewish elitism and blood libel killings, along with false rumors about Jewish responsibility for the failing economy. Such reports encouraged not only verbal abuse but also physical assaults against Jewish citizens. As another article in the *Jewish World* puts it, the development of an anti-Semitic mob mentality was enabled by “the comparative security with which the [hate] crimes [could] be committed.”<sup>14</sup>



These assaults were perpetrated not only by people on the street but also by the police. In the February 17, 1882 issue of the *Jewish World*, an article titled “Police Attack on Jews” describes a seemingly random assault on a “Jew named Schpiwak” whose home was overtaken by eight policemen who “called to their assistance a number of workmen and idlers, and then began to break up everything within the place,” ultimately “set[ting] fire to the house.”<sup>15</sup> Though the perpetrators allowed “the inmates to escape” the attack itself illuminates the injustices Jewish people faced during the 1880s.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of how many articles like these were published in the *Jewish World*, the cycle continued. Discriminatory articles that depicted Jews as scapegoats for all of Britain’s problems continued to appear in the mainstream press.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most notable example of biased reporting against Jews in the British press was, surprisingly, coverage of a murder that took place outside of Britain: the Tisza-Eszlar case in Austria-Hungary (1882). This case sparked anti-Semitic, sensational reporting on Jewish blood libel murders in the British press. Beginning with the 1144 murder of William of Norwich in England, anti-Semites believed that Jewish people engaged in ritual killings of Christians. In the Tisza-Eszlar case, the disappearance of a Christian girl was pinned on fifteen Jews who were said to have ritualistically murdered and beheaded her.<sup>18</sup> The story was frequently reprinted for sensational effect in the mainstream British press, indirectly supporting arguments against Jewish immigration. Unsurprisingly, amidst this media onslaught, the Jewish press published almost daily accounts of anti-Semitic behavior. During the time of the Tisza-Eszlar case, the *Jewish World* published articles such as “The Anti-Jewish Riots in Russia and Poland” (January 13, 1882); “Horrible Atrocity” (February 3, 1882), an article covering the murder of a Jewish innkeeper’s family; and, “Another Police Attack on Jews” (February 17, 1883), which appeared exactly one year after the “Police Attack on Jews” article discussed above.

Over five years later, between August and November of 1888, the Jack the Ripper case unfolded, and with it came further anti-Semitic press coverage.<sup>19</sup> Once again, the fallacious idea of Jewish ritual murder was back in the spotlight. Curtis notes that these reports negatively affected the Jewish community in Whitechapel, as the “Ripper news help[ed] to rekindle the fires of anti-Semitism. ... No doubt these efforts to enthrall readers with Gothic tales of ritual Jewish murder ... pleased the owners and stockholders of those London papers whose circulations soared during the season of the Ripper.”<sup>20</sup> And soar they did. In “Mutilation as an Atonement,” published in the *Leeds Times* (October 6, 1888), the author opens by saying:

With reference to the atrocious murders in London, attention may be called to a crime of an exactly similar kind which preoccupied the public in this country for nearly three years. A Galician Jew named Ritter was accused in 1883 of having murdered and mutilated a Christian woman in a village near Cracow. The mutilation was like that perpetrated on the body of the woman Chapman, and at the trial numbers of witnesses deposed that among certain fanatical Jews there existed a superstition to the effect that if a Jew became intimate with a Christian woman he would atone for his offence by slaying and mutilating the object of his passion.<sup>21</sup>

In this way, the author connects Judaism not only with superstition and fanaticism but also with a fabricated history of ritual violence that provided necessary “context” for the Ripper murders. Even though this case, like the others, ended in acquittal, the author throws the accused man’s innocence into question, saying that the new trial – which had commuted the original sentence of death – was ordered “upon some techicality [sic].”<sup>22</sup> Even when the article notes that the third and final trial proves Ritter’s innocence, the author still concludes that “the evidence touching the superstitions prevailing among some of the ignorant and degraded of his [Ritter’s] coreligionists remained on record and was never wholly disproved.”<sup>23</sup> In the British mainstream press, Jewish people were always presumed guilty.

### **The Jewish Press: Journalism as Resistance**

At the same time that anti-Semitic articles were being published in mainstream papers, Jewish journalists were responding in whatever ways they could. Less than a week after the *Leeds Times* published “Mutilation as an Atonement,” for example, the *Jewish World* opened its October 12, 1888 issue with an article entitled “Panic and Prejudice.” The author directly refuted the accusation that a Jewish person was responsible for the Whitechapel murders, noting that it is a “grave matter which has given rise to no little apprehension.”<sup>24</sup> The author establishes his/her position as a member of a community that has been silenced in the mass media, remarking that the *Leeds Times* has intentionally facilitated a “stupid suggestion” that was likely designed to appeal to its target audience, “an excited mob.”<sup>25</sup> While identifying these “Blood Accusations” as problematic, the author also attempts to keep peace with the editors of the widely read *Leeds Times* by remarking, “We can readily believe that the correspondent was unaware of the mischief his suggestion was likely to cause, and that its publication was due to blundering carelessness on the part of some member of the editorial staff.”<sup>26</sup> While the overarching message is that the claims published in the *Leeds Times* are irrational, the *Jewish World* also sends a message to the Jews living in Whitechapel: be careful. The author pleads with fellow journalists in the mainstream press to report truth while reminding readers that “Jews and foreigners ... [in] the East End [are] but too susceptible to prejudices of the kind which all now sought to be revived” and that “an unruly mob” is likely to be excited to “‘demonstrate’ as anti-Semitically as any.”<sup>27</sup> This fine balance of resisting fake news in unity with one’s own community while simultaneously asking for assistance – or, at the very least, valid reporting – from “Gentile fellow-citizens” is characteristic of much writing in the *Jewish World* during the 1880s and beyond.<sup>28</sup>

It was not just editors and writers who actively utilized the press as a medium of resistance; readers spoke out against injustice as well. On May 11, 1888, the *Jewish World* published a letter from John Simon titled “The Invasion of England.” Simon was writing in response to an article with the same title published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Although an editorial note indicates that Simon’s letter has “not yet appeared” in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, it proudly prints it in the *Jewish World*.<sup>29</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* article opens vehemently: “‘Above all,’ said General Boulanger to a Socialist admirer on Saturday, ‘we must get rid of the Jews.’”<sup>30</sup> The article continues in this vein, calling the immigration of Jews an “invasion of England” which is “a matter for grave alarm.”<sup>31</sup> Its central argument is that “the foreigner is starving our people out of hearth and home” and that this phenomenon is happening across the globe.<sup>32</sup> However, the author argues that England is different from other countries in one clearly defined way: “hitherto we have taken no steps whatever to avert [immigration]. ... In England alone anybody and everybody is free to enter in as he likes, to settle where he likes, and to live how he likes.”<sup>33</sup> He then specifically hones in on the Jewish people living in the East End, saying that they are “small, and ... generally sickly. Their habits are anything but cleanly ... They are very frugal.”<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, he uses this description as the basis of his argument about how “the standard of comfort is lowered in our great cities.”<sup>35</sup> Although England is great in freedom and charity, he concludes it has perhaps given too much, since “for nations, as for individuals, charity should begin at home; and we shall be surprised if the combined result of the Sweating and the Immigration Committees is not to place some check upon the invasion of England.”<sup>36</sup> The article is clear in its anti-immigration focus, directing its ire specifically toward the Jewish community.

*The Pall Mall Gazette* was, from its founding, an exemplar of the New Journalism, a genre of news writing aimed at attracting a mass readership by providing a steady supply of

scandal and crime stories, which often read more like melodrama than news coverage. While W.T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the time, argued that such reportage would serve a democratizing function by reaching a mass audience and uncovering abuses within society, his brand of sensationalist reporting also often had the effect of demonizing immigrants, using them as scapegoats for urban crime.<sup>37</sup> However, even if the sensationalistic nature of New Journalism produced the kind of narrow stereotypes Jewish journalists were forced to combat, it also offered a set of strategies that could be used to resist these denigrating tropes. First among these was participatory journalism, what Ann Hale calls “media-based community engagement.”<sup>38</sup> This technique was forged by Stead not only in the *Pall Mall Gazette* but also in the *Review of Reviews*.<sup>39</sup> It was also employed by Jewish newspapers, which incorporated readers’ reactions to prejudicial reporting in the mainstream press.

In his response to “The Invasion of England” published in the *Jewish World*, John Simon engages in participatory journalism, speaking out against the anti-Semitic language in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He implores the author, “Instead of preaching extermination, does it not occur to you, that a better remedy would be to use your influence with this barbarous Government to adopt a more humane treatment of its Jewish subjects?”<sup>40</sup> Simon goes on to highlight the hypocrisy of the British love of freedom: “You say that in England alone ‘anybody, and everybody is free to enter in as he likes and to live how he likes.’ You would revise this policy ... [and] confine the term ‘foreigner’ to the Jews. As a matter of fact, as you may learn from the report of the Jewish Board of Guardians, not one-fifth of the foreign immigrants who come to this country are Jews. Germans, Poles, and other immigrants are chiefly Christians.”<sup>41</sup> He further remarks that the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s approach alienates Jews from the Liberal party: “It cannot be otherwise, when they find in a ‘Liberal’ paper anti-Liberal opinions, and endeavours to create

and to foster racial and religious antipathies.”<sup>42</sup> Simon emphasizes the religious and political problems created by the original piece and by any news outlet willing to publish anti-Semitic attacks, noting that all Christians who agree with such views are “hollow canting professors with Christianity on their lips, and malice and the same evil passions in their hearts which were denounced in the Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>43</sup>

Simon’s letter was never published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.<sup>44</sup> Yet the *Jewish World* published many other debates, resulting in chains of communication that amounted to as many as thirteen responses back and forth.<sup>45</sup> Although Stead pioneered participatory journalism, the Jewish press utilized it as a means of building a sense of community and resisting the anti-Semitic stereotypes presented in popular press.

### **Fiction or Reality? Imaginative Literature in the *Jewish World***

In addition to using participatory journalism as a strategy for resisting anti-Semitic reportage in the mainstream press, editors of the *Jewish World* also used imaginative literature to make a case for acceptance and understanding. Rather than locating poetry and fiction in the back pages of the paper in a separate “literature” section, the *Jewish World* often published these works alongside non-fiction content. Amy Levy’s poetry, for example, appears throughout the *Jewish World*, and Hume’s *Mystery of a Hansom Cab* is given its own section amidst the pages of day-to-day reporting in at least eleven instances during 1888 alone. The “Correspondences” column included not only responses to articles published in the mainstream press but also reviews of popular fiction of the time. In the *Jewish World*, imaginative literature provided opportunities to reflect on Jewish culture and to counter stereotypes in the mainstream press.

The June 23, 1882 edition of the *Jewish World*, for example, included an article titled “Victor Hugo on the Russian Question” that took up nearly half of the first page. The author goes

beyond simply reviewing Hugo's novels, instead introducing him as an advocate for Jewish relief who "raise[s] his voice in protest against the personal sufferings of our people."<sup>46</sup> The author compares Hugo to the "prophetic Seers of old," defining him as a "poet, dramatist and moralist" who pushes against "the Russian horror" and "lift[s] the edge of the dark curtain" towards "that greater light ... the God of truth, justice, conscience, and love."<sup>47</sup> The author bases this assessment in a variety of Hugo's works, including letters, poems, and a political tract, "Religions et Religion," which was published in 1880 and supported the belief in God even though it objected to organized religion because of the prejudices it sometimes encouraged. The author then pieces together excerpts of Hugo's works, reading them through the lens of social justice. It reinforces Hugo's status as advocate for the suffering Jewish community by placing quotations from his work and from scripture side by side: "Victor Hugo summons the world to take its choice – 'The spectre holds the thread of life between its fingers!' In other words, 'See, this day I have set before thee life and good, and death and evil [Deuteronomy 30:15].'"<sup>48</sup> This juxtaposition is a call to action, a plea to choose "life and good" over "death and evil." *The Jewish World* thus brings literature into its pages in order to argue for tolerance and understanding, using Hugo, a renowned author, as a tool of resistance against the sensationalized, anti-Semitic reporting in the mainstream press.

*The Jewish World* immediately follows "Victor Hugo on the Russian Question" with an article titled "The New Laws in Russia," which discusses "three new laws for restraining the 'economical activity' of the Jews."<sup>49</sup> Echoing the Hugo article, it argues that these laws will lead to "the friction of Jewish and Christian interests" becoming "infinitely sharper," leading to "seeds of new troubles."<sup>50</sup> The placement of these two articles is no coincidence, with the plea for peace in the first article standing as a solution to the problem identified in the second. The

*Jewish World* thus set itself apart from many other papers of the time by placing news and literary criticism side by side so that readers could envision how the poetic truths of literature could resolve the unpoetic realities faced by Jewish immigrants.

In addition to using literary criticism to inspire readers to see beyond the sort of harsh stereotypes offered up by the mainstream press, the *Jewish World* also published poetry that addressed the dire realities faced by Jews with an uplifting tone. For example, on January 27, 1882, it reprinted a poem from *Punch* titled “A Cry from Christendom.” The only text added by the *Jewish World* was an introductory sentence indicating where it had originally been published and adding that “the Russian outrages and the horror which they have evoked from Christianity are aptly symbolised.”<sup>51</sup> The opening line of the poem, too, expresses outrage: “Whose ear is so dull in its deafness, whose heart / is so callous and cold, / As to turn from the cry of the wronged, ringing / forth as so often of old, / Though uplifted by alien lips?”<sup>52</sup> The unnamed author links immigration, religious persecution, and politics, arguing that victims of persecution should be heard regardless of their country of origin: “Of what matter whence under Heaven the piteous plaint cometh forth; / As of late from the plains of the East, as to-day from the snows of the North, / Sable-shadowed with Hate’s dark eclipse?” She/he goes on to note that the powerful are the source of the problem:

The wise of the earth are but fools, and its mighty but little of soul,  
The Teuton’s grim truculent Chief, striding on to his much-desired goal,  
Would trample a people as dust;  
And the Muscovite, mouthing the name of humanity, closes his ears  
To the wails from the homes he wrecked, to the pleadings of women in tears,  
From the revels of murder and lust.<sup>53</sup>

Although this passage could apply to any form of religious persecution, the next sequence directly addresses the issue of anti-Semitism, stating that “No respecter of race or of faith, let Humanity lift up her plea, / Like a *Portia* who pleads for the *Jew*, since the wronged and the



hated is he.”<sup>54</sup> In these lines, the author pinpoints prejudices against Jews and follows it with a grim image of their communal pain. Furthermore, the poem places responsibility on the backs of those with power: tolerance towards Jews is not the responsibility of the “wronged and hated” but rather those who are perpetrating such injustice. The poem is thus a call to action, but it concludes on a dire note, ultimately leaving readers to contend with the violence of the present day:

But the horrible rage of brute hordes by the slack hand of Power let slip  
The cold Mephistopheles smile on Authority’s cynical lip, –  
These Christendom fearlessly brands:  
Tells Emperors, Prince, or dull Peasant ‘tis playing a ruffian part,  
To share in such revels of shame, with the throb of black hate in the heart.  
And the red stain of blood on the hands.<sup>55</sup>

This image of corrupted, seemingly demonic, power with a “cold Mephistopheles smile” being supported by the Christian masses, is meant to leave readers with a feeling of dread. If the governing authorities are motivated by “the throb of black hate,” how can humanity survive? By reprinting this poem and situating it within editorial commentary alluding to anti-Semitism, the *Jewish World* warned of the malignance caused by discrimination and made a passionate plea for unity.

Readers joined editors in interpreting literature from a culturally sensitive point of view. While in the Hugo analysis and the *Punch* poem, the editors highlighted literary examples with a unifying message culled from popular print culture, correspondence published in the March 2, 1888 issue of the *Jewish World* drew attention to the anti-Semitic language found in a popular novel, Eliza Lynn Linton’s *Thro’ the Long Night* (1889).<sup>56</sup> The letter opens with an editorial note indicating that the letter was not originally intended to appear in the *Jewish World*: “We have been asked to publish the following correspondence that has recently passed between Mr. I. Cohen of Brownswood Park, and Mrs. Lynn Linton.”<sup>57</sup>

Cohen remarks that as “an admirer of [Linton’s] works” he<sup>58</sup> “was pained and surprised” to find a line in *Thro’ the Long Night* that read, “The *Jews* were sharks of a more formidable kind.”<sup>59</sup> He goes on to say that “if you search the criminal annals, you will, I think, find that Christian usurers figure pretty largely” and then references “A Miscarriage of Justice,” a recent article in the *Evening News*, where “it is a *Christian* who charged another Christian something like 100 per cent. interest! I have yet to learn that the name *Jew* (I thought an honored one!) is synonymous with thief or shark, as your line suggests.”<sup>60</sup>

In her response, Lynn Linton avoids an apology, instead writing, “Long before I was born, the term Jew as a money lender, was synonymous with extortion and usury. I use the thoughts, applications, and phrases which were used in centuries long before this and up to this day.”<sup>61</sup> Centering her argument in a prejudicial history, she proceeds to maintain that her words are objectively true, saying that “to be in the hands of the Jews means to be in the hands of extortioners, whether they are Jews by race or pious by faith.”<sup>62</sup> She goes on to remark that she herself has “great respect for the Jewish Nation, several of whom are among my best and dearest friends.”<sup>63</sup> Circling back on her own argument, she concludes by saying that her craft is “symbolic, rather than literal” and that “a violent tempered man does not deny the quality of gentleness” among all people.<sup>64</sup> She finds Cohen’s “sensitiveness somewhat over-strained,” noting that though she “honor[s] all forms of loyalty, we can push even this virtue to excess.”<sup>65</sup> Although her response is steeped in prejudiced rhetoric, the fact that it was published in a public forum, the *Jewish World*, highlights Jewish resistance: what might otherwise have gone unnoticed is instead placed in the limelight so as to encourage close inspection of how fiction can perpetrate stereotypes and influence mass opinion. *The Jewish World* encourages readers to take

a stand, participating in a conversation that is literary yet newsworthy, unsettling yet empowering.

In some instances, the Jewish press achieved measured success in countering anti-Semitism. For example, six years after the Tisza-Eszlar episode, the *Jewish World* finally noted on September 28, 1888 that all Jewish prisoners in this case were found innocent of murder, and the policeman involved confessed to perjury and hanged himself.<sup>66</sup> Though it was a tragic case, it represented a victory for the Jewish press: articles published by the popular press in England surrounding the incident, as well as those published in the following years, rejected the very notion of blood libel. Furthermore, editors in the British popular press were now more willing to publish contributions from Jewish readers, as shown in the *Standard*'s "Correspondences" section on April 29, 1889, where James H. Loewe calls the accusation of the murder a "horrible charge which should never have disgraced this civilised and enlightened century."<sup>67</sup> He responds directly to a piece from the German press, addressing both editor and paper as "anti-Semitic" and accusing the editor of operating "under the delusion that he can scatter broadcast the seed of hatred with impunity."<sup>68</sup> He criticizes the idea of blood libel as a culturally based motive or crime and concludes simply with a Psalm directed towards the German press: "Behold, the champion of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth."<sup>69</sup> Jewish resistance to unfounded accusations could finally be voiced in the mainstream popular press.

### **The Woman's World: Levy's Peace and Estella's Protest**

At the same time that the *Jewish World* attempted to voice a unified Jewish perspective in opposition to the mainstream British press, it concurrently struggled to navigate conflicting worldviews within the Jewish community. While they made progress in the mainstream press, it's important to note the Jewish community was still a complex web of individuals. At the fin de

siècle, the Jewish press waged their own internal battles between tradition and progressivism, especially where gender, sexuality, and religious dogma were concerned. The response of the Jewish press to the late Victorian woman's movement exhibits its effort – both successful and unsuccessful – to face disparities within their own community. *The Jewish Standard*, for example, characterizes Amy Levy's *Reuben Sachs* as "hasty, superficial, and ill-balanced" thus conveying frustration with a woman often linked to first-wave feminism.<sup>70</sup> This response to her work stems not only from Levy's work itself, but from her many responses to editors of Jewish newspapers. Much like John Simon's response to "The Invasion of England" or I. Cohen's response to Lynn Linton's *Thro' the Long Night*, Levy and others actively responded to issues that plagued the Jewish community; however, their responses directly faced problems within, namely issues of gender, thus complicating the relationship of the Jewish press with its surrounding community. One of Levy's many letters addressed to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* deals directly with being a female member of the Jewish community: "We have to deal with facts, not theories, and it is a great fact, that there has sprung up a large class of intelligent, capable women who are willing and able to perform work from which they find themselves shut out by the tradition of ages – women, who are destitute of their 'natural protectors,' or whose aims lie outside the circle which convention has marked out for them."<sup>71</sup> In this response and others like it, Levy showed one of the many forms of diversity within her own community. Yet, despite her resistance to the language of the male editors, the *Jewish Standard*, along with the *Jewish World* and the *Jewish Chronicle*, all regularly published Levy's works. While the *Jewish Standard* questioned Levy's success, it also published one of her poems in the same issue:

PEACE.

Deep in the grass outstretched I lie,

Motionless on the hill;  
Above me is a cloudless sky,  
Around me all is still:  
There is no breath, no sound, nor stir,  
The drowsy place to break;  
I close my tired eyes – it were  
So simple not to wake.<sup>72</sup>

Though Susan Bernstein and other critics note that Levy was often targeted by the Jewish press for her feminist views, often perceived to be radical, the publication of this poem and others demonstrates their commitment to publishing her work.<sup>73</sup> *The Jewish Standard* calls Levy's "Peace" a striking work that demonstrates her "lucidity" and provides a "drowsy place to break" from the tumultuous, violent experiences of Jewish people living in the East End.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, woman's protest writing was to some extent seen as a force for healing and as positive evidence of a changing Jewish community, not only concerned with resisting outside stigmas but with facing internal challenges through discourse. As is suggested by the sometimes dissonant reviews of women's writing in the Jewish press, women's voices did not always harmonize with those of the male editors. In "A Girl's Protest," published in the *Jewish Standard* on February 1, 1889, a woman calling herself Estella challenged the editor for his "weekly complaints Jews don't study Rabbinical."<sup>75</sup> The poem progresses into a defense of women's character: "And as for his cry girls don't study the Bible, / With all due respect, that's a scandalous libel."<sup>76</sup> She quips, "In winter, of course, one's so bothered with dances / That to read even novels one gets but few chances; / But in summer each tick I can spare from lawn-tennis is / Devoted to reading the chapters in Genesis."<sup>77</sup> After satirizing the editor's prejudices against women, she concludes, "I've a lot more to say though I've no time just at present, / To complain of the numerous statements unpleasant / Which your Editor frequently heaps up all pell-mell – a /

Trick, which costs him the love of – Yours truly, Estella.”<sup>78</sup> She thus takes on the issue of misogyny in the Jewish press while playing with the definition of what a woman can be.

By choosing to publish poetry and correspondences by women, these editors acknowledge that its readership is not strictly harmonious – there is prejudice, along with critical conversation underway both inside and outside the Jewish community. In addition to confronting anti-Semitism in mainstream newspapers, the Jewish press provided a platform for journalistic self-criticism, including the voices of women, which did not always agree with the editors’ patriarchal perspectives. Though the responses from women may have been similar to Cohen’s and Simon’s, the Jewish newspaper press demonstrated its insistence on growth by publishing these instances of direct resistance towards the editors themselves. The ability to critique and self-critique complicates the Jewish press and its surrounding community and was crucial to the success of the Jewish newspaper press during a tumultuous phase of Anglo-Jewish history.

### **London: The Palimpsest of Today**

The stranger to the scene is at first baffled and bewildered. The roadway is filled with large tramcars, and the footways are crowded with groups of busy loungers ... Yet the crowds are peaceful and entirely non-aggressive in demeanour. There is no sign of lawlessness. – “Whitechapel,” *Sunday at Home*, 1 Jan. 1895.

“Wake up, Alice dear! Why, what a long sleep you’ve had!”<sup>79</sup> I am shaken by noise, an invisible yet all-consuming rhythm in Whitechapel; Alice awoken from her dream. I am back in the East End, treading paved-over cobblestone. I wander into the Whitechapel Gallery: holograms and burning lights envelop a replica of Minerva, the goddess of poetry, wisdom, and magic. What was meant to fill in the missing pieces of marble seems to have shrouded her stony body. Lost in the present moment, I can no longer see details, make out her history. Yet staring at her eyes, I see the stone and hologram mix together, adding a glimmer of light that would have otherwise remained invisible. Walking outside, I see Amy Levy’s *Reuben Sachs* staring through a

bookstore window until a Jack the Ripper tour eclipses it. “*We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by the beauty of the ideal from the claims of the actual,*” I worry the tour guide might hear my thoughts, but I’m reassured: his whirring holographic images of a dead Mary Ann Nichols and the children’s laughter are too loud for that.<sup>80</sup> They move past, and I’m left in silence, in a place where the buildings read like a continuation of the art exhibit: the old stone seems to have lost its origin. Tiptoeing around construction cones, my eyes fasten on a piece of white against the brick. I push aside a tattered poster that reads “Commuting at the Cost of Community?” to discover a small rusted plaque: “New Road Synagogue, 1892-1974.”<sup>81</sup> I think back to Minerva’s eyes, suddenly remembering Kate Flint’s point, that even though “the present [is] overwriting the past ... the past is still glimmering through.”<sup>82</sup> On one hand, pieces of our palimpsest are overrun by irony: “The Pro-Slavery ‘Revival’” layered over by “500,000 Whites Died to End Slavery Forever.”<sup>83</sup> “The U.S. Government Turned away Thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing that They were Nazi Spies” only partly conceals “Why America was Indispensable to the Allies’ Winning World War II.”<sup>84</sup> Likewise, “Coming to America: The Story of Immigration,” is overwritten by our all-too-present moment: “The U.S. a Nation of Anti-Immigration Immigrants.”<sup>85</sup> Despite the inconsistencies and hypocrisies: the strength of the resistance remains. John Simon’s response to “The Invasion of England” is boldly written over and continued by Black Lives Matter, by Families Belong Together; Estella and Levy are followed by growing waves of feminism, and the #MeToo movement. As truth fights against fake news, the pursuit of social justice continues; the resistance marches on.

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<sup>1</sup> In Hebrew, “That does not make sense.” Google translate.

<sup>2</sup> See O’Reilly, “Nazis and anti-Semites Slip through GOP Primaries, Causing Headaches for Parties,” Fox News, 20 July 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Jones & Mitchell, “Reading the Victorian and Neo-Victorian Graphic Palimpsest,” in *Drawing on the Victorians*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Shugerman, “More than 4m Antisemitic Tweets Sent in One Year, Report Finds,” *Independent*, 9 May 2018.

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<sup>5</sup> See Shugerman, “Anti-Semitic Incidents Rise 60 Per Cent in a Year in US,” *Independent*, 27 February 2018; quoted in Kaplan and Fisher, “Record Breaking Number of neo-Nazis and White Nationalists Running for Office in the U.S.,” *Haaretz*, 15 July 2018.

<sup>6</sup> See “The Invasion of England.”

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Jewish community and the Ripper killings, see Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London*; Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*; Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*. For more information regarding the press and sensationalism – including the invention of New Journalism – see Clarke, *Late Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock*, with special attention to chapter 4, “Something for ‘the Silly Season’: Policing and the Press in Israel Zangwill’s *The Big Bow Mystery* (1891).

<sup>8</sup> For more information on sweaters and Jewish immigration, see Smith, “Greeners and Sweaters: Jewish Immigration and the Cabinet-Making Trade in East London, 1880-1914,” 103-120.

<sup>9</sup> See Russell and Lewis, *The Jew in London*. The authors heavily discuss how the established Jewish community (1850s) moved to the ritzier West End, leaving the East End to the poor Jewish immigrants.

<sup>10</sup> “Whitechapel,” 22.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> “Have the Outrages been Exaggerated.” The term “nakhayka” is a phonetic version of the Hebrew “נִכְיָכָה” which translates to “knout,” a term which means beat or flog.

<sup>14</sup> “Horrible Atrocity.”

<sup>15</sup> “Police Attack on Jews.”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> There seems to be a correlation between an increase in anti-Semitic reporting and violence against Jews; however, there is not enough direct data for me to assert this with absolute confidence. For reference on the increase in violence in the 1880s, see Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*; Jones, *Outcast London*; and Englander, “Policing the Ghetto: Jewish East London, 1880-1920.”

<sup>18</sup> See Handler, *Blood Libel at Tiszaeszlar*; Herczl, “The Preparatory Years” in *Christianity and the Holocaust of the Hungarian Jewry*. Herczl’s chapter is especially noteworthy as it covers eyewitness testimonies and Hungarian publications immediately following the event, ultimately noting that the “match that ignited the barrel of gunpowder of the blood libel was lit by the village Catholic priest” who used journalism to spread his message of antisemitism through “an article that was published in the clerical paper” (12).

<sup>19</sup> Dates taken from Jenkins, “Jack the Ripper.”

<sup>20</sup> Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press*, 237. In fact, the debate of Jack the Ripper’s identity as a Jew continues on, as shown in Russell Edwards 2014 publication, *Naming Jack the Ripper*, in which he claims Aaron Kosminski, a Polish Jew, was the Ripper. His contemporary allegation still has consequences, as shown in Lenny Picker’s “Jack the Ripper, One of Us? No, Thanks,” *Forward*, 21 November 2014.

<sup>21</sup> “Mutilation as an Atonement,” 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “Panic and Prejudice,” 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> “The Invasion of England.” This note, likely added by the editor, precedes the letter by John Simon.

<sup>30</sup> “The Invasion of England,” 1. The author is unknown; however, given the typical publication style of the *Pall Mall*, there is a high probability that this opening piece was written by the newspaper’s editor at the time, William Thomas Stead.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> For more information on New Journalism, see Brake and Denmoor’s *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, 443. It is also worth noting that there was a negative reaction to New



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Journalism. See, for example Matthew Arnold's critique of Stead where he remarks that the *Pall Mall Gazette* "throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatsoever," further solidifying his belief that this type of sensational journalism could only lead to bigger societal problems: "the democracy, with abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts, is disposed to be, like this journalism, feather-brained" (quoted in Campbell's 2003 article "W.E. Gladstone, W.T. Stead, Matthew Arnold, and a New Journalism," 1).

<sup>38</sup> Hale, "W.T. Stead and Participatory Reader Networks," 17.

<sup>39</sup> For more information on the *Review of Reviews*, see Laurel Brake's chapter "Stead Alone: Journalist, Proprietor, and Publisher 1890-1903," in *W.T. Stead Newspaper Revolutionary*.

<sup>40</sup> Simon, "The Invasion of England."

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. For more information on Liberalism, see Feldman's, "Jews in the East End, Jews in the Polity, 'The Jew' in the Text." It is worth keeping in mind that there are several meanings of the word "liberal," that do not all correspond with politics. However, in this instance, the context points towards a political affiliation.

<sup>44</sup> Although Simon's response was never published, there was one rejoinder from an unnamed author published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on May 9, 1888. This response was less extensive than Simon's, amounting to just a small paragraph. In it, the author argues in favor of immigration, noting that Englishmen refuse "to let men poorer than ourselves work for their daily bread" and that even if anti-immigration legislation were practicable, it would beg the questions "Could any policy be more directly opposed to the cosmopolitanism of Christianity? Could any policy tend more to nourish national hatreds and prepare for mutual massacres?" (n.p.).

<sup>45</sup> For more information on participatory journalism, see Kitchin, *The London 'Times' Under the Management of Moberly Hill*. Clare Clarke further unravels this new facet of journalism in her 2014 book, *Late Victorian Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock*. She cites the previous work of Brake and Denmoor and places them in conversation with other scholars, like Kitchin. For example, she writes, "For George Earle Buckle, editor of *The Times* from 1884 to 1911 ... readers' letters were 'the most valuable "free copy" in the world. Whenever anything happens anywhere, or any topic of interest is being discussed,' he noted, 'the most distinguished authorities in the land will write to *The Times* about it'" (81). She makes it clear that these "distinguished authorities" come in all forms – "writers, politicians, doctors, police chiefs, and lawyers – as well as every day working-class readers" (81).

<sup>46</sup> "Victor Hugo on the Russian Question," 1. Though the author remains unnamed, it is probable that it is written by the editor at the time, Myer Davis, due to its location at the opening of the paper as well as its careful placement in relation to surrounding text.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> "The New Laws in Russia," 1.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> "A Cry from Christendom." *The Jewish World's* preface does not mention the original author but does say the poem was originally published alongside "an excellent cartoon by the veteran artist, Mr. J. Tenniel," (n.p.).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. The author also references Portia from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1600) and Mephistopheles, either from German folklore or Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* (1592).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Though today known as *Through the Long Night*, this novel is referred to as *Thro' the Long Night* in this essay to maintain consistency in how it is mentioned in this correspondence. The novel was originally published in serial form in the *People* before appearing in a volume edition in 1889.

<sup>57</sup> Though I cannot say for certain, I have been unable to find this correspondence anywhere else in print; it is likely to have originally been a private correspondence between the two parties.

<sup>58</sup> I use "he" because both the editor and Mrs. Linton address the original party as "Mr.," but it is worth noting readers are never given a full name by the author him/herself, instead only receiving "I. Cohen."

<sup>59</sup> Cohen, "'To Mrs. Lynn Linton,' Mrs. Lynn Linton and the Jews."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Linton, "'To I. Cohen,' Mrs. Lynn Linton and the Jews."

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> “The Sequel to the Tisza-Eszlar Case.”

<sup>67</sup> Loewe, “Jew-Baiting: To the Editor of the Standard,” 3.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “The Woman’s World,” 4.

<sup>71</sup> Levy, “Jewish Women and ‘Women’s Rights,’” 5.

<sup>72</sup> Levy, “PEACE.”

<sup>73</sup> See Bernstein’s chapter, “‘Mongrel Words’: Amy Levy’s Jewish Vulgarity.” Bernstein explores Levy’s feminism and explains how it was at the core of why she was often construed in the Jewish press as a “vulgar, unfeminine author” (144). For more information on Levy, see Hughes, “Reading Poet Amy Levy through Victorian Newspapers,”; Beckman, *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters*.

<sup>74</sup> “The Woman’s World,” 4.

<sup>75</sup> Estella, “A Girl’s Protest,” 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, 189.

<sup>80</sup> Levy, “Jewish Women and ‘Women’s Rights,’” 5.

<sup>81</sup> El-Harrak, “London’s Crossrail: Commuting at the Cost of Community.”

<sup>82</sup> Flint, “Photography, Palimpsests, and the Neo-Victorian,” 331.

<sup>83</sup> “The Pro-Slavery ‘Revival,’”; Tweet from @wrongsideofpar, 30 July 2018, 1:25 pm.

<sup>84</sup> Gross, “The U.S. Government Turned away Thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing that They were Nazi Spies,”; Hanson, “Why America was Indispensable to the Allies’ Winning World War II.”

<sup>85</sup> Maestro, *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration*; Ashby and LaRosa, “U.S. a Nation of Anti-Immigration Immigrants.”

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